

A WALK IN THE PARK

It is a sweltering, humid August day and Nathaniel is stuck in the city. A smog alert has been issued. The mayor has asked everyone to minimize use of air conditioners, lights, household appliances, and to keep cars off the road as much as possible. Bored and hot, Nathaniel decides to talk with his grandfather who is living with his family now. Can he explain what all this environmental fuss is about? After all, isn't air conditioning supposed to be used in hot weather?

Nathaniel's grandfather is also feeling uncomfortable in the heat, but he has an idea. He suggests that they walk down to the local park. Nathaniel reluctantly agrees. He puts on his baseball cap and off they go.



As they walk to the park, Grandpa reflects on Nathaniel's question. "Where I spent my childhood, there was no need to worry about water, air, or heat. We could drink out of the river, and the air was fresh and clean. Cool breezes and large trees in our backyard kept us comfortable in the summers. We were surrounded by nature." Nathaniel and his grandfather finally reach the park. Nathaniel immediately feels cooler as soon as they walk into the wooded area. The hum of traffic and loud noises are replaced by the sound of their breathing and an occasional bird call.

They find a secluded place to sit and Grandpa continues. "The last couple of generations have been unkind to the environment. People thought that technology would solve all our problems and took nature for granted. Instead, we have created new problems. We are creating too much waste, polluting the air, and ruining the land."

Grandpa says, "Do you know that this area used to be covered in weeds and grass? There were no trees. Now, it has become a park, thanks to some very dedicated volunteers. They planted native vegetation and returned the land to its original, natural state. Insects, birds, and wild animals have returned here. People enjoy this place."

"But there is nothing to do here," responds Nathaniel.

"This may not have the excitement of a computer game, or the action of a mall," continues Grandpa, "but if you are quiet enough and you take the time to observe, there is actually quite a bit happening here."

Sure enough, after several minutes of gazing at the trickling river, Nathaniel spots a muskrat swimming by! He has never seen one before!

"I wonder if I could join the volunteer group that helps keep this place so beautiful?" he asks. Nathaniel has totally forgotten about the heat.

Naturalization

Naturalization, like wildlife, is a word we all take very seriously.

- It means allowing land to regenerate encouraging grass to grow, trees to reseed themselves and native wildflowers to cultivate and flourish.
- It means allowing nature to do the landscaping and inviting wildlife to revisit the land.
- It means letting nature be, in order to preserve our environment for future generations.

We've begun a naturalization program in this and other areas of Mississauga. More trees, wildflowers and native fruit and flower bearing shrubs are being planted.

Please enjoy the natural beauty of this area and always remember to let it be.

If you would like more information about naturalization, call Parks Mississauga at 905-536-4444.

MISSISSAUGA
Parks

Let it be.

LINKING TO LITERACY

Environmental Print

Our environment "speaks" to us through signs and symbols everywhere: signs on stores, menu boards in drive-throughs, billboards, road signs, and even signs in natural settings like parks and nature trails. Readers need to be able to read messages in all places so that they can follow directions, instructions, and rules and regulations.

Read the sign on this page. Discuss the following with a partner or small group:

- How is this sign related to what Grandpa talks about in the story?
- After reading the sign, describe in your own words what naturalization means to you.
- What other signs might be posted in the park? Think about messages for park users to protect the environment, learn about plants and animals, and help them enjoy the park.